



**DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
BUREAU OF ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS AND TECHNOLOGY**

1:00 – 3:00 PM

MINUTES

December 7, 2020

Commission Members in Attendance

Raymond, Mark – Commission Chair and Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST
Baillie, Colleen – Director, West Haven Public Library
Caruso, Nick – Senior Staff Associate, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education
Casey, Doug – Executive Director, CT Commission for Educational Technology
Cohen, Burt – Staff Attorney, Office of Consumer Counsel
Dillon, Tom – Independent (Minority Leader of the House)
Dumais, Charles – Executive Director, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.)
(Office of the Governor)
Elsesser, John – Town Manager, Town of Coventry (CT Council of Small Towns)
Gopalakrishnan, Ajit – Chief Performance Officer, State Department of Education
La Valle, Dawn – Director, Division of Library Development, Connecticut State Library
Mavrogeanes, Rich – President, Discover Video (President Pro Tem of the Senate)
Provencher, Maura – Vice President of Research and Administration,
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC)
Shellard, Susan – Director of Administration, Department of Economic and Community
Development (DECD)
Stanco, Bart – Vice President, Gartner (Office of the Governor)
Stephanou, Steve – Deputy General Manager, Town of Manchester
(Connecticut Conference of Municipalities)
Stewart, Erin – Mayor, City of New Britain (Minority Leader of the Senate)
Zak, Scott – Senior Director of Learning Technologies, Board of Regents

Others in Attendance

Francoline, Olivia – Intern, Town of Coventry
Kocsondy, Ryan – Director, Connecticut Education Network (CEN)
Racamato, Victoria – Assistant to the State Chief Information Officer, DAS-BEST
Sullivan, Maureen – Interim State Librarian, Connecticut State Library

Meeting Format

The December meeting took place via Web conference, given social distancing practices to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. The Connecticut Network (CT-N) has provided [a recording of the meeting](#).



Welcome

State of Connecticut Chief Information Officer and Commission Chair Mark Raymond called the meeting to order shortly after 1:00 PM, welcoming the members and others in attendance. He remarked on the ability of state and local government to adapt and change to the needs of remote learning to minimize the spread of the Coronavirus. He thanked the members for their dedicating to helping maximize the positive impact of technology in teaching, especially given the demands of the last nine months. The innovative spirit behind this work reflects the vision and thinking that went into the creation of the Commission more than 20 years ago.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The Commission members had the opportunity to review [the minutes of the September 14, 2020 meeting](#) prior to today's gathering. Mark welcomed a motion to approve the minutes, which Chip Dumais offered and Rich Mavrogeanes seconded. With no call for discussion or revisions, the Commission approved the document unanimously.

Everybody Learns Initiative

Doug provided an overview of the Everybody Learns initiative to equip all public-school students with a computer and Internet connection to support learning. He pointed to the work as an excellent example of inter-agency collaboration and problem-solving. He asked Ajit Gopalakrishnan to address the recent good news regarding device delivery, highlighted in Governor Lamont's [announcement December 2](#).

Ajit shared that the last of the 142,000 computers purchased through the combined contributions of the Dalio Foundation and Everybody Learns fund are being delivered, with three-quarters going to the neediest towns, the Alliance Districts. He noted the quick delivery of the devices, despite global supply-chain issues, and thanked Mark for his role in fast-tracking the procurement of the computers. Ajit has also overseen the delivery of nearly 13,000 mobile hotspots to connect students to the Internet. He mentioned the ongoing discussions among Chief Academic Officer Irene Parisi, Doug and him to identify other means of closing the digital divide.

Doug addressed work to connect students through cable Internet service, leveraging agreements with five cable providers. He mentioned progress to date, getting more than 5,000 households online, many of which have multiple students. Work continues through a public awareness campaign (www.CT.gov/GetConnected) to encourage residents to register for affordable service packages. For parents of school-aged children, the call to action is simply to contact their school. Given the months of work



between Everybody Learns team members and districts, school officials are well equipped to help get these families online through their local provider. Sharing the opportunity to receive free Internet access depends on strong community partnerships, a theme that carries over to efforts that Ryan Kocsondy of the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) is leading to install wireless access points for public use.

The community wireless installations will provide "walk-up, drive-up" access in the 20 rural and 20 urban communities with the highest percentage of unconnected residents. The CEN team will design and deploy solutions, each of which takes 4 – 5 months to complete, with a handoff to the local site managers (e.g., libraries, schools, or municipal offices). In response to Burt Cohen's question about how long the access points would remain in place, Ryan stated that the program provides one year of support, and then the assets and management transfer to the site manager.

In addition to receiving wireless access points, many libraries received support through the Everybody Learns initiative, with the goal of getting locations to accommodate 75 percent of their total capacity. Maureen Sullivan shared that many libraries are thrilled with the awards they have received. Dawn La Valle, the project lead, highlighted the \$2.6M commitment from the Office of the Governor for 62 libraries. These investments will address several needs, including enhancing wireless networks, the purchase of loaner devices and hotspots; planning of space and the creation of safe "study pods"; air scrubbers; and personal protective equipment (PPE). John Elsesser congratulated Dawn and Maureen on their work but felt that eastern Connecticut towns did not receive adequate funding. Maureen did note that awards were based on need. With no further discussion, Mark closed out the topic by noting the ongoing collaborative efforts across schools, towns, community partners, and State agencies to make these efforts successful.

Report of the Executive Director

With no further discussion concerning the Everybody Learns initiative, Mark turned to Doug Casey to provide highlights of his previously posted [quarterly report](#).

- **Everybody Learns Initiative**

The posted report provides highlights of efforts and impact to date. Doug also shared the good news of forthcoming technology training through a Google partner. Early in the fall, Doug had discussed this opportunity with Google's education team, which provides no-cost professional development to districts and states that purchase large quantities of Google devices or licenses. Given the State's investment in 60,000 Chromebooks, Connecticut certainly qualified for these supports. While a formal announcement will be coming soon, Doug shared that the arrangement will provide 500 educators across the state with



access to the full catalog of courses from Kiker Learning on a variety of instructional topics tied to Google products. The program will also provide 20 hours of Web-based training open to any teacher or professor in the state. Irene Parisi, the Department of Education's Chief Academic Officer; Ajit; and Doug are working with Kiker Learning to distribute the course vouchers and plan the 20 hours of open training to address the remote learning needs of teachers and to support device rollout and maintenance for technology leaders.

Burt Cohen, who has contributed significant guidance regarding broadband policy and practice to the Everybody Learns initiative, acknowledged the large investment of time and impact of the work to date. Family adoption of free Internet access remains lower than expected, as he noted, and he asked Doug to speak to this issue.

Doug explained that estimated connectivity needs came from district requests collected this summer. Recent focus group and one-on-one discussions with school leaders have since revealed several issues that may vie against higher adoption rates. Many do not feel comfortable sharing information with cable companies, especially undocumented families and non-native English speakers. In other cases, families needing to be home for installation find it difficult to schedule these visits because of demanding work hours. Some districts requested mobile hotspots and cable connections for the same families; delivery of the hotspots in August addressed the broadband needs of these families with no need for cable connections. He also mentioned that many of the addresses provided by districts as needing broadband are actually current cable broadband customers. This insight alone has proven helpful, helping to differentiate students who are disconnected versus those who have the technology resources to participate in remote learning but who are not engaged.

In sum, the Everybody Learns broadband efforts have addressed the provision of technology for learning, with continued outreach needed to change attitudes toward its adoption and use. Burt agreed, noting that families need coaching and support to get online and make good use of devices and broadband. Mark stated that not everyone sees the connection between broadband and success in teaching and learning. Many still view Internet access as "nice to have" and for entertainment versus a fundamental requirement to participate in remote learning. Connecticut's libraries, schools, and social services agencies continue to change these attitudes and increase adoption rates.

From his experience in supporting the device and hotspot aspects of the program, Ajit noted that the pandemic has further exposed existing inequities in



access. Efforts from the Department of Education and districts to engage and support families has always taken place, and remote learning has added technology to the list of needs that outreach teams help to address. He also acknowledged the outstanding work of district technology directors in rapidly deploying and managing thousands of new devices provided by Everybody Learns and the Partnership for Connecticut over the past six months.

Doug shared a model program in Norwalk called the [Family Navigators](#), which Dawn La Valle originally shared. Spearheaded by the library and funded by the Dalio Foundation, the program provides several case workers who are reaching out to 400 families in the city to help address their health, economic, social services, and broadband needs. Doug also shared the strong partnership through the United Way to equip the 2-1-1 call center with information about free Internet for students. Burt echoed the key role that school and local town libraries serve in supporting connectivity and digital literacy needs. Dawn also acknowledged this important work and called attention to the disparities in staffing for library media specialists between wealthier and poorer school districts. Large, urban communities tend to lean more heavily on the services provided by their local libraries when school libraries are under-staffed. Colleen Bailie echoed these thoughts, noting the ongoing work in local libraries to support patrons' digital literacy needs.

- **Open Education Resources**

In addition to connecting students for remote learning, work continues in the area of open education resources (OER). Doug confirmed that procurement was moving forward on a statewide portal to provide teachers with the ability to create, share, curate, and use openly licensed digital learning materials. Early in 2021 he will convene a governance and planning team to ensure oversight of content creation and sharing by district leaders, alignment of materials with academic standards, and quality review.

- **Application of ISTE Standards in Workforce Strategic Plan**

The Governor's Workforce Council recently released its [strategic plan](#), addressing business leadership, skills development, equity, and impact measurement. Doug shared this plan because it calls for the integration of the ISTE Standards into the public-school curriculum. He thanked the members for their commitment to digital learning standards, reflected in the adoption of the ISTE Student, Educator, and Education Leader frameworks. These steps have elevated the importance of digital competencies as a key lever in strengthening the state's talent pipeline.



- **Technology Efficacy and Use**

To provide district leaders with insights into student and teacher use of instructional software, Doug has worked with LearnPlatform to expand the use of that toolset. Through a recent outreach campaign, he has encouraged districts to sign up for a free dashboard to reflect actual use of educational technology products. More than a third of all districts have signed on, allowing them to make informed decisions about software investments, measure return on investment, oversee compliance with state and federal privacy laws, and explore opportunities for volume purchasing and shared training across districts.

Digital Learning Advisory Council Report

After thanking Doug for his updates and continued efforts on behalf of the Commission, Mark turned the meeting over to Nick Caruso, Chair of the Digital Learning Advisory Council. Nick began by remarking that today marks the 20th anniversary of his service as a Commission member. His experience provides perspective on the rapid progress made recently to address digital learning needs, that these activities in some ways address the “what-if” possibilities that past Commission teams have considered.

At the November Advisory Council meeting, [minutes of which](#) the Commission received in advance, members of that group discussed the adoption of the [American Association of School Librarians](#) (AASL), which address student competencies, teacher skills, and recommended staffing levels for library media specialists. Nick asked Commission members whether adoption of the AASL standards fit within the group's purview. The Advisory Council members agreed to look further into the AASL standards in order to consider a formal recommendation to the full Commission.

Perhaps more pressing, the Advisory Council agenda also addressed the need to provide teachers with the time and resources to strengthen their use of digital tools and pedagogies. An area of ongoing concern is the list of mandated training, recently reduced from 106 to 80 hours annually, based on [past recommendations](#) (PA 16-9). Even with these reductions, the group questioned the need for 10 days of annual training at a time when teachers need intensive supports around remote learning. The Advisory Council members considered a motion to reduce the list of mandated trainings, and Doug has engaged in discussions with members of the Professional Development Task Force and Department of Education to identify risks and barriers to this approach.

Mark recognized the need to support teacher training on important topics but questioned whether any group has assessed the frequency of training to attain proficiency. Nick welcomed that question and acknowledged the work of the



Professional Development Task force to assess these needs in the long term. In the short term, however, he saw a need for flexibilities in mandated professional development this school year and perhaps next. In his Lighthouse training to school board members, Nick underscores the importance of providing adequate time for targeted professional development within the constraints of a fixed number of days.

Speaking to the constraints imposed by mandated professional development this year, Chip Dumais noted the recent flexibilities to reduce instructional days to 177 from 180, though there has not been a commensurate reduction in required training. Providers such as the regional education service centers (RESCs) have developed catalogs of on-demand, targeted training for teachers, and educators need more time to leverage these resources. Doug added that the stress of remote learning highlights the need for training on other time-sensitive topics such as social and emotional learning. John Elsesser suggested that districts can leverage days when inclement weather would normally close schools to offer on-demand professional development. He also suggested that younger teachers generally have had more exposure to using technology in their daily lives and may be more comfortable in using digital tools to support remote and blended learning. Closing out the conversation on this topic, Ryan reminded members of the 2021 CEN conference as a venue for educator and education leader training.

Infrastructure Advisory Council Report

Tom Dillon shared highlights of the November 2 Infrastructure Advisory Council meeting, the highlight of which was a discussion of the Eduroam launch in New Haven. (For details, see the [Advisory Council meeting minutes](#), shared in advance.) The initiative provides a secure, unified means for all students and staff in New Haven Public Schools (NHPS) to access the Internet through the networks of Southern Connecticut State University and Yale, among other participating institutions. Logging on through the "Eduroam" service set identifier (SSID) on wireless access points provides a way for schools to offer a secure guest network limited to educational use by students and staff with Eduroam-enabled credentials. Using Eduroam also provides detailed reporting on where students log on — by host as well as home institution — to help quantify the impact of the initiative.

Tom acknowledged the hard work in leading the rollout by Sabina Sitaru, outgoing NHPS director of technology, current NHPS director of technology Gilda Herrera, NHPS network manager Bill Zesner, SCSU chief information officer Dennis Reiman, Ryan, and Doug. The launch represents the first community-wide Eduroam initiative in Connecticut, a model for other towns and cities to emulate. Tom welcomed Commission member questions and encouraged them to share the Eduroam launch with their professional networks to increase adoption across the state.



John Elsesser commended the efforts of everyone involved and inquired about the costs necessary to use Eduroam in other towns. Ryan noted that New Haven was well positioned for a quick and relatively low-cost implementation. The schools already had some of the key components necessary to roll out Eduroam, including a managed (enterprise) wireless system, a directory service, and radius server. Communities that lack one or more of these elements would face more direct and indirect (staff time) costs to implement Eduroam. John shared his vision that all Connecticut towns would enable Eduroam, and Ryan noted that Utah already has a statewide Eduroam program. He did note that the new community wireless access points, supported by the Everybody Learns program, will offer the Eduroam SSID to spur broad use and adoption of this authentication solution.

Mark expressed his gratitude for the collective and persistent effort to bring Eduroam to New Haven and thanked Tom for his passion and leadership to drive the digital equity initiative forward.

CEN Updates

Mark welcomed Ryan to speak to recent work through CEN and encouraged Commission members and attendees to review in full the [December CEN updates](#). Touching on just a few of the topics, most of which address member cost savings, Ryan noted a 2% reduction in service rates across all connectivity tiers starting July 1. The decision to reduce rates should help CEN member institutions, many of which face fiscal challenges as a result of the pandemic. The Network also rolled out the Bandwidth Bonus Program, allowing institutions to increase bandwidth demands at no cost except for one-time fees to cover optics. Ryan and the CEN leadership team offered this option to support the likely increases in bandwidth needs resulting from increased uses of technology to support learning. A total of 55 institutions, nearly all K – 12 districts, have taken advantage of this program.

The CEN team has also renegotiated its iBoss cloud connectivity agreement and finalized a Securly contract that benefits 27 participating school districts, netting a savings of approximately \$600,000 when compared with collective costs to purchase through standard cooperative purchasing agreements. This solution came directly from suggestions put forth by the CEN Service Management Advisory Council.

The Network continues to grow with 11 new members. All CEN member institutions can look forward to the annual conference, which will take place virtually. Those interested in presenting at the event can visit www.ctedunet.net to submit applications. With no Commission member comments or questions, Mark thanked Ryan for his service and creative solutions to deliver value to the Network's member institutions.



Public Comment

Following the CEN report, Mark issued a call for public comment, with none given.

Scheduled 2021 Meeting Dates

Mark shared the scheduled meeting dates for the next year and expressed hope that the June meeting may be in person. He also encouraged members to consider creative ways to use technology for virtual elements of Commission meetings, reducing the time and travel burden to attend and engage fully.

- Monday, March 1
- Monday, June 7
- Monday, September 13
- Monday, December 6

Adjournment

Having addressed the agenda items, Mark called for a motion to adjourn. Burt provided the motion, Nick the second, and the members voted unanimously to conclude the meeting at approximately 2:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Casey
Executive Director

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.